Murder Issues

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Murder Issues

by Hannigrammatic

Summary

> Will and Hannibal fall on rough times.

Notes

> Hi!
>
> All mistakes are mine~

Worth of a Man

Chapter Summary

> Will and Hannibal grow physically closer, but there are still too many variables getting in the way.

A few weeks after Abigail's birthday, Will acquired a part time job at *Crawford's Treats* as a cashier.

It wasn't exactly easy work, but he was a quick learner, and despite Jack's towering countenance, the man was actually more reminiscent of a teddy bear than anything dangerous. There was no doubt at all that he could probably bench press ten of Will, of course, but working for him and his wife was turning out to be a thankfully positive experience. But the customers? It didn't matter that there were only a handful that ever approached rude, each new customer was a nerve-wracking experience that brought him back to his days as a teenager when he worked at a fast food joint. Within another week he eased into it, though. He took the orders with a swiftness that he learned from observing Jack, while said man prepared the coffee and other intricate beverages, and Will once again thanked Hannibal for getting him the job.

With a kiss. And another and another, until he was half climbing on the man's lap as they sat together in his Bentley after his shift on Monday.

Will started at nine-thirty AM, which afforded him plenty of time to get Abigail to school, and ended at two-thirty in the afternoon, and that left him with an hour to himself before he had to head to the school. He only had three shifts a week, however, so he took on a cleaning job at an office building near his home, loathe to work evenings but taking what he could to cover rent and utilities. True to her word, Hannibal's secretary had talked to her niece, and it was almost as if life were actually working *with* him now, because she came over on the weekends while he worked his second job until eleven PM. All in all, he had plenty of time to spend with Abigail.

And Hannibal.

It was over dinner one evening that the man officially asked him out, regardless of the fact that it wasn't needed. They'd been on enough dates -murder and non-murder ones-, and had been growing exponentially closer in the short period of time that they had been acquainted. There hadn't been many earnest discussions, however, and so the gesture was appreciated. And accepted in full, of course.

"To murder love," Will joked as he held up his glass of wine.

Hannibal tipped his own glass against Will's gently, eyes narrowed but face otherwise neutral. They were seated at a secluded table at a restaurant that Will knew he would never have chosen himself, nevermind the fact that every dish was more expensive than his grocery bill. He wore a black dinner jacket Hannibal had purchased for him recently, navy blue slacks, and a pair of his least ratty shoes, and had used far too much product in his hair to tame it. But somehow Hannibal didn't seem embarrassed to take him there -in fact he seemed proud, took Will by the arm and paraded him to their table as if he were the star attraction.

"To burgeoning happiness," Hannibal rectified with a smile. "And to love; that which bites, but thankfully always with reason."

"Love isn't the only thing that bites," Will said with a snicker, and it grew into a near-guffaw when Hannibal's cheeks turned pink, before the elegant man coughed into his hand delicately and *actually looked away* shyly.

They were fairly intimate, but they hadn't done much other than make out enthusiastically. Will supposed it had a lot to do with the fact that neither of them had been with a man before, romantically or not. But they were both incredibly open minded and, more importantly, far too enamored with the other to function within labels of any sort. And what could even be said for two men who had bonded during gruesome acts of murder? What was love, anyway, other than another word that would never be enough to adequately describe what they had together?

"Wow, I just made Hannibal Lecter blush," Will toasted himself with a sly grin when he noticed that the man was frowning at him - or trying to, anyway. "Don't be ashamed. You look *adorable*."

Hannibal's frown stuttered, and finally his lips pulled into smirk, and they looked at each other across the table with fondness. It was only a matter of time before Will felt his own cheeks heating, and he broke eye contact briefly to cut into the succulent meat on the plate before him. When he brought the forkful of juiciness to his mouth, though, he looked back up as he bit into it and wrapped his tongue sensually around the utensil. He'd meant it as a joke, honestly, but the way Hannibal's own lips parted and his tongue ran along the bottom one as he stared hard into Will's eyes, well…

"I don't believe I am partial to that word," Hannibal said, voice deepened just slightly.

"Really?" Will whispered. "I'm pretty sure you used it to describe me."

"Correct," Hannibal took a bite of his own food and savored the food afterwards, not looking away as an exaggerated expression of bliss passed over his features.. "But that is because it is fitting. I daresay it's reserved for you, at this point."

Will swallowed around the lump in his throat as he felt his neck go hot. Hannibal was correct; there were far many other words that could be used to describe the man before him just then, but most of them came back to variances of 'sexy' and 'hot' in Will's less poetic mind. He found he was completely fine with that, though, and furthermore so was his body, stomach drawn taut as blood rushed to his extremities. Will imagined those bowed lips trailing down his throat to suck a mark into his skin, pictured long fingers sneaking beneath his fancy

clothes. Gulping, he looked back down at his plate with an inward groan. *It really is highschool again*, he thought.

“Why is that?” he finally asked.

“Because you are never not in a state of adorableness,” the man claimed. “And that is as bizarre to confess as it is to think, I assure you.”

“I feel like I should be offended,” and Will laughed as the tension that had grown in his belly lessened as they fell back into a humorous atmosphere.

Best to leave the teasing for when they weren’t in public, afterall.

❀

On Will’s front step, Hannibal pinned the younger man to his door. His arms trapped Will on either side, clutching the wooden frame as their lips met and clashed passionately but still frustratingly restrained. The kiss was wet and claiming, and Will made a soft sound as he yielded beneath the onslaught, drew Hannibal closer with his arms around a strong neck. He felt as if he were far away, cheeks hot and red as he breathed out his nose heavily, but he clearly felt the knee that situated itself between his own, moaned as Hannibal’s thigh ghosted against the hardening warmth there. Fingers slipped beneath the waist of his slacks to tickle along the coarse hairs of his belly briefly before the man finally drew away.

“May I come in?” he whispered into the shell of Will’s ear.

Will nodded wordlessly and fumbled at the doorknob behind him. He lead them in quietly and straightened his clothes subconsciously as he went to dismiss Lydia Speck, and she had been gone perhaps two minutes before Hannibal was backing him into the living room, lips devouring his little sounds and his breath alike. Will found himself lying on his back beneath the bigger man as their tongues tangled and their hands wandered, and the heat trapped betwixt them drew dampness upon their brows.

“We can’t,” Will murmured as Hannibal began to mouth at his neck, and he bared his throat to give him room even as he pushed weakly at wide shoulders.

“I know,” Hannibal growled quietly and laved his tongue over Will’s pulse point.

“Hannibal,” the younger man arched beneath him and tangled his fingers into silvery brown hair. “We-”

“*I know*,” Hannibal withdrew with a loud sigh.

He sat up reluctantly, and Will swallowed heavily as his body veritably vibrated with need. He wanted to but he couldn’t, not on his couch and not even in his room. The house was tiny and the walls were paper thin, and there was no way in hell he was going to have sex with Hannibal Lecter when his daughter was hardly a room away. He leaned heavily on the other’s shoulder for a moment, nuzzling under his chin when Hannibal wrapped an arm around him

to draw him close. The house was silent save for their quiet panting, and even that didn't last very long as they settled into calmness.

"I should probably head home," Hannibal said eventually.

"Yeah," Will agreed hesitantly. "I'm sorry."

"Whatever for?" soft fingers tipped Will's head back slightly as lips settled on his forehead briefly.

"Being a tease? I don't know," Will huffed out a laugh and closed his eyes at the sensation, felt his heart still hammering in his chest at the affection between them.

"That you may be, but the circumstances render it necessary," Hannibal smiled at him then. "And as such, I forgive you -for now."

"Oh, really? I'm listening."

The easy banter had an undercurrent of sensuality, and Will adored it as much as he did the man he embraced. It was still a surprise that they melded so easily together, but he wasn't going to question it. There was nothing that he could conceive of that could rain on his parade, and so he locked his lips with Hannibal's again for a languid goodnight kiss, saw him out the door, and then walked through the house to turn off all of the lights. He left a lamp on in his bedroom and undressed slowly, taking his time to remove the clothes and wishing it weren't his own hands drawing along his heated flesh, and as he settled into bed he held one of his pillows clasped to his chest.

He fell asleep and dreamt that he was dancing a waltz with an onyx-skinned demon. They were in a decrepit ballroom with human hearts hanging from the ceiling, and upon a dais before them a pale-skinned girl stroked boney fingers along the keys of an untuned piano.

Her lament was haltingly beautiful.

❀

Hannibal cinched his robe tight around his waist and padded back into his bedroom after scrubbing his teeth. The warmth from Will's fluttering fingers had yet to leave his skin, the sensations humming along his body until he could feel it in his very bones. He sighed longsufferingly and settled under his heavy duvet, leaned back against the cushioned headboard behind him, and switched his tablet on. But instead of perusing his usual articles he merely stared blankly at the screen as he recalled the very first time he had seen Will Graham - well, his back at any rate. It was interesting how fate worked, how a man could go from one extreme to the next in under a second; he had existed one day as a single entity with selfish desires, and now he found himself unable to bear the thought of being alone.

No, of being without Will.

Hannibal had nearly dropped the orderly pile of papers that were bound for Ms Speck's desk, saved only by his catlike reflexes as he strode into the lobby. His secretary smiled at him

brightly as she accepted the invoices, but Hannibal kept his eyes snapped fast to the slouching, plaid-clothed back as it left his shop. He blinked curiously at a profile he beheld in passing (long lashes, a gently sloping nose, messy brown curls covering eyes he couldn't determine the color of), and his lips thinned as he felt his heart skip a beat.

Well.

"He said he might be back," the blond woman said. "His daughter is very passionate about learning to play the piano."

"Ah."

And he did come back, eventually. Doe eyed and shifting awkwardly, innocence in the dimples at the corner of his lips, Will Graham signed his daughter up to tutor under Mister Lecter, smile polite and white teeth glinting. And, Hannibal reflected, deliberately charming.

It was almost as if it were an act.

Worth of a Lie

Chapter Summary

A coincident is not always a coincidence, especially when it most definitely is not.

Trouble is brewing in murder paradise.

Chapter Notes

UHM. So yeah, things are happening! ♥

All mistakes are mine~

A woman screamed long and loud on the television before them, father and daughter sprawled on their tiny couch with a bowl of popcorn propped between them. Abigail had picked another horror film, this one less slasher and more of a psychological thriller, and he found himself honestly interested in the storyline as the actress hallucinated with artistic detail the death of her family. He shoved a handful of salty popcorn into his mouth and chewed as he considered how to broach the subject he had been putting off since Abigail's birthday.

"So," he started uncertainly. "How's school going?"

Abigail shifted against her end of the couch but didn't look away from the carnage on the screen as she answered, "It's okay. Mrs Bloom says I should enter the Spelling Bee. It's next week."

"That's awesome," Will said genuinely. "You going to do it?"

"I don't want to," she confessed as she finally looked at him over the bowl of cooling popcorn. "Too many people."

"I understand," and Will really did, flashing back to those times where he was required to present a project in front of his peers, bile rising in his throat as he quivered and stuttered. "Listen, Abi, I-"

"I heard you," his daughter interrupted him. "At the grocery store before my birthday. I heard you and Mrs Bloom talking about me."

Heart skipping a beat, Will set his hands in his lap and watched the scene change in the film - now there was a sharp-dressed man talking into a cell phone. It took him an inordinate amount of time to look at his daughter, but when he did he found her staring straight ahead, profile carefully blank. She looked ten years older, a young woman facing an ordeal and not a child watching a movie on a Saturday afternoon. Will remembered the day clearly, weeks ago in the past now but fresh on his mind as it was every night he procrastinated talking to Abigail.

“I’m sorry,” Will murmured. “I was hoping you hadn’t.”

“You could have talked to me about this sooner,” and finally she looked at him, and he saw her wide blue eyes were full of worry, a pair to mirror his own. “I was waiting for you to.”

“Abigail,” Will started, but then he stopped and sighed. “Did I do something to make you feel like you had to make up Elise Nichols?”

“I didn’t make her up,” her brows scrunched together at him and her voice raised slightly. “But she doesn’t go to school with me.”

“Abi-”

“I didn’t make her up, dad.”

Her voice was small and unsure, but it also had an undercurrent of angry determination. Will set the bowl of popcorn on the table in front of the couch so it didn’t spill, and then shifted to face his daughter. The movie was forgotten entirely, and the room was silent for what felt like an eternity.

“It’s okay if you did,” he finally said. “If you wanted me to feel better. If you didn’t want me to worry about you. Mrs Bloom tells me you don’t have many friends.”

“You mean any, right?” and there was bitterness now that broke Will’s resolve entirely.

“Let’s just watch the movie and forget about this,” he decided. “It doesn’t matter, we’re safe and we’re okay.”

“No. I want to talk about it,” she drew her knees to her chest and set her chin against them. “I didn’t make her up, dad. Elise is real.”

“Alright, I believe you,” Will said, and he realized he *did* believe her words, or maybe he was so desperate to attain peace between them that he would do anything.

“I don’t like the other kids at school,” Abigail confessed into the still air. “They’re simple and boring. I like Mister Lecter, dad. I don’t need friends.”

Will frowned at the mention of his lover. It was strange for the man’s name to come into play suddenly, but he brushed it off and moved closer to Abigail, who sniffed loudly before launching herself against him. They embraced tightly, and Will felt himself on the verge of tears as he stroked at her soft hair. He had more questions than he did answers now, however, and he drew away to look down into sapphire eyes.

“How do you know Elise, then?” he asked gently, inwardly trying to make sense of everything but failing to -and now he was concerned about the mention of Hannibal’s name. “Does she take lessons with Mister Lecter, too?”

“She did,” Abigail muttered as she looked away. “Mister Lecter says she deserved it, though. Please don’t be mad at me.”

“Deserved what, sweetheart?” his chest suddenly felt cold with foreboding.

“I’m sorry,” she pressed her face into his chest and wrapped little arms around him, shaking like a leaf in a storm. “Mister Lecter said I shouldn’t tell you. Not yet.”

“What else did Mister Lecter say?” Will heard himself ask the question, but his mind -and heart- were gone, soaring into the abyss.

“That we’re going to be happy,” she smiled up at him now, uncertainly but meaningfully. “He said no one is going to find out and we’re going to be happy.”

❀

They had exchanged numbers at some point, but without a cell phone Will didn’t find much use for it unless he was home. The city was small and it was easy to run into Hannibal, anyway, find him at *Lecter’s Legato*, or, more often than not, they had prior plans that ended in them meeting up here. Will sat on his bed after work, Abigail fast asleep in her room, and stared at the rumpled piece of paper in his fingers. He fought the irrational urge to tear it into shreds even though he didn’t need it anymore, having memorized the elegantly written sequence of numbers already, and finally heaved a tired sigh as he stood and wandered into the kitchen where the phone resided. Hannibal picked up on the second ring.

“Good evening, Will,” his accented voice greeted him, and Will’s heart and stomach clenched unpleasantly.

“Hi,” he went silent after saying the word, filled it with too-noisy breath instead.

“Will?” Hannibal sounded mildly worried.

“Come over,” Will said simply. “Now.”

And he hung up.

It was rude and incredibly childish, but Will found he didn’t care about keeping any pretenses at the moment, and he tore up the paper as if in remonstration. He tossed it into the trash afterwards and sat at the kitchen table to wait, listening to the clock and counting the seconds, and he’d reached two thousand and twenty when two precise knocks sounded at the door. Getting up to answer it was difficult, his legs stiff with tension, heart thrumming and sweat lingering in the palms of his hands, but he did, closed his hand around the doorknob and pulled it open forcefully. He looked at Hannibal Lecter and felt as if he were greeting a stranger -again.

“Come in,” he muttered.

He left the door open and wandered back to the table to flop into the chair gracelessly, and he watched his guest close the door behind him with uneasiness in his smooth movements. Hannibal toed out of his shoes and walked with socked feet to claim the chair on the opposite side, and for a long time they were both completely quiet as they contemplated one another.

“You’re angry,” Hannibal observed.

“No shit,” Will quipped, and he regretted it immediately as he watched Hannibal’s maroon eyes steel angrily.

“That is quite the tone,” the older man said with a minute tilt of his head. “May I inquire as to what I’ve done to deserve it?”

“You shouldn’t have to,” Will griped. “I should be the one inquiring. Who the fuck is Elise Nichols, Hannibal?”

Hannibal felt his heart skip a beat. It wasn’t in dread, nor was it in anything approximating fear at Will’s discovery. He could tell by the new light in those expressive blue eyes that he had finally talked to Abigail, however, and so he relaxed in his chair. The pieces were set in motion, the game continuing, but he felt prematurely victorious in that instant as he observed the straight-backed posture and fiery anger directed at him from Will Graham. Oh, how the man burned so prettily.

“She was a former student of mine,” he answered neutrally.

“I know. Abigail told me,” Will set his hands on the table before him and tapped nervously at the hard surface, and he found that he could easily maintain eye-contact with the serial killer, bolstered as he was by the emotions thumping through him.

How he had fooled himself into believing his life was a fairy tale, Will would never understand. Here he was in his own home with a man he barely knew anything about. And now, considering recent developments, he knew even less. It was frustratingly difficult not to see Hannibal in the warm, romantic light that he had begun to regard him with, but Will found that he was doing so successfully so far, made easier by the betrayal threatening to shake him apart. His throat burned with a scream that wanted out, one that was full of anger and betrayal and self-hatred. *I’m a fool*, he lamented. *Walking hand in hand with a demon and kissing him despite the blade at my back.*

“What else did Abigail tell you?” Hannibal questioned in his impossibly calm voice.

“That Elise ‘deserved it’,” Will growled. “That you told her not to tell me yet. What did Elise deserve, Hannibal? And what the fuck aren’t you telling me?”

A relationship built on lies, Will realized. He narrowed his eyes and closed the rest of himself off to the man he knew he had fallen for as hopelessly as he did stupidly. There would be time to berate himself later, though, and he waited patiently as Hannibal shifted in his chair and set his own hands on the table to mirror Will.

“If I am going to answer that,” he began. “Then I will need to start from the beginning.”

“Do it,” Will snapped.

“I’m unsure that you are ready,” Hannibal reached across the table and settled his long fingers over one of Will’s hands, and when the other reflexively pulled away, Hannibal felt something inside of him twitch angrily.

“You don’t get to decide that,” Will’s voice was angrier now, louder, and there was a scent in the air that was bitter -bitter and familiar.

“I understand,” Hannibal whispered.

He drew his hand back and clasped it over his other, took on a regretful expression while on the inside he was full of utter *aliveness*. Here was a creature full of potential and beauty, a heart that was both strong and simultaneously rotting with loneliness; here was Will Graham, the light of his life and the object of every desire Hannibal hadn’t realized he’d had until he saw the man for the very first time. Will looked fragile as he sat there in the tiny kitchen, but it was a carefully constructed image that Hannibal delighted in picking apart. No, he was not fragile, not in any sense of the word.

Will Graham was a beast that would devour anyone and anything so long as Abigail was kept safe and happy.

It didn’t take long for Hannibal to find out that Will was a single father. Asking around produced an image of the man that didn’t match his own initial one.

Where others saw him as twitchy and awkward, Hannibal beheld someone that had perfect control of himself and how he wanted others to see him; where Ms Speck saw a single parent struggling to give his daughter a semblance of happiness despite financial constraints, Hannibal saw fierce devotion and the ready acceptance that came from a man willing to do anything to protect his family. To die or to kill, the ends justified the means entirely.

All in all, Hannibal Lecter saw in Will the same ability to transcend morales and laws entirely, and it was an observation made fact when Abigail told him one evening over the keys of a piano that she knew her father was a killer. He listened intently as she painted a picture worth more to him than any of the priceless classics decorating his home.

From there it was easy to set everything into motion.

“Let me tell you over dinner tomorrow,” Hannibal spoke the words with utter calm despite the storm raging in the blue eyes locked on his.

“So you can impress me with your cooking?” Will asked with a harsh tone.

“So that I can offer comfort in a way that I am more than capable of,” he softened his tone and looked away from Will with an uncertainty that was only partially feigned.

“Fine. But you will tell me everything,” Will demanded. “No more lies.”

“No more lies,” Hannibal echoed.

And oh, what irony filled that statement.

Worth of a Beast

Chapter Summary

Will is quick to learn that not everything is as it seems.

Chapter Notes

-FALLS OVER- Okay this was hard to write, and I reread it at least 10 times, not to mention picked it apart even more, but I'm satisfied at last.

All mistakes are mine~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The main dish: grilled pork chops with balsamic caramelized pears, arranged artfully on a pristine white plate.

Will inhaled when the plate was set in front of him and barely managed to refrain from moaning at the delicious scent, mouth watering instantly while Hannibal sat across from him with an identical serving. He took the first bite, unable to help as his eyes closed at the moistness of the meat and the sourly sweet taste of the marinade, and Will marvelled as it fell apart on his tongue, melting succulently into his tastebuds. He remembered the few times he'd attempted pork chops, and the contrast was extreme (then again, any meat dish he ended up cooking tasted more like rubber or leather.)

"This is delicious," Will said after he'd swallowed his first few bites.

"I am glad you enjoy it," Hannibal had waited until his guest consumed the first bite before following suit, and his eyes glittered at the praise he received not only in words but in the expression Will hadn't been able to keep off of his face.

"I'm still pissed at you," Will grumbled while he cut another slice of meat, pleased as it slid off of the bone easily.

"Naturally," Hannibal conceded -though inwardly he felt a twitch of anger at the unsavory words being uttered at his table. "Perhaps we might be able to remedy that tonight."

"Maybe," despite his lack of etiquette, Will didn't go so far as to shrug despite the urge to, instead steeling his expression into determination. "Can I be honest with you, Hannibal?"

“You may always be honest with me, Will” Hannibal tilted his head curiously, the unspoken *in fact I prefer it* made apparent by maroon eyes narrowing at him over the rim of a wine glass.

“If we weren’t close,” Will started, set his utensils down on either side of his plate, and then paused as he met Hannibal’s gaze resolutely. “I would kill you for this transgression.”

His words were spoken softly, but they managed to echo through the dining room ominously. Will felt his heart skip a beat only once when Hannibal set the glass down to regard him seriously. It was no secret that they were both the kind of people that didn’t take well to threats, implied or not.

“Understood,” Hannibal responded after a short time.

“Good,” the younger man reached for his own wine and swallowed a mouthful, bypassing the attempt to smell it as gracefully as Hannibal did before each polite sip. “Now tell me everything.”

Rude. Will Graham was incredibly rude, but Hannibal found himself verily tickled pink at the other’s words, at his narrowed blue eyes and similarly tilted head, a younger mirror image at his own dining table. Truly this evening would be interesting, and for the most part he intended to be honest as well, knowing that Will deserved it, but there was an amount of disquiet at his breast. It was a bundle of *somethingness* that had enough strength behind it to give Hannibal pause.

Don’t you love how I break?, Will’s eyes already seemed to ask, before the conversation could reveal the truths that would do just that. But regardless of the results, Hannibal would be there to comfort him.

“Abigail came to me willing to learn and even more willing to put in the effort to than most of my students combined,” Hannibal began. “It was refreshing. In fact her thirst for knowledge is insatiable much like my own, I must say.”

“With less body parts in freezers, thankfully,” Will rolled his eyes and set his glass down loudly, challenge writ clearly in expression and movement. “I want the beginning but I don’t want any comparisons between you and my daughter.”

Hannibal froze. It was very clear that his guest was deliberately attempting to enrage him, and while he was sorely tempted to put Will in his place, he wondered for the first time if he were capable of that. It was very possible that he had underestimated the younger man entirely, taken his softness for weakness despite knowing the truth of the beast across from him, and Hannibal nursed the disquiet in his chest again. More than that, though, Hannibal found himself hurt.

“Do you detest me, Will?” he asked with carefully placed emotion. “For my perceived lies?”

“Detest? No, Hannibal,” Will’s veneer of righteous anger slipped at the word, blinking bright blue eyes at him as if he’d just realized something unpleasant. “Do you- why would you ask that? I mean I’m *mad*, yes, but-”

“Your words imply otherwise,” Hannibal interrupted Will and allowed himself to look perturbed.

“My daughter cried in my arms after telling me that Elise Nichols ‘deserved it’,” Will protested. “She begged me not to be mad at her, and then told me that *you* said-”

“I’m quite aware of what she said already, Will,” Hannibal interrupted again.

Will growled and pushed his chair back so hard it nearly upended, and Hannibal grinned inwardly at his victory. A beast, yes, but even the most ferocious of creatures could be played. They merely required tuning once in awhile. He watched said beast pace away from the table, dinner forgotten -a slight that Hannibal would not forget any time soon.

“For someone that relies so heavily on appearance,” Will grumbled while looking up at the painting over the fireplace. “You can be incredibly *rude*, Hannibal.”

“Can I?” Hannibal inquired with a smirk the other couldn’t see, the irony a delightful flutter in his guts. “I expect you are capable of the same. Or did you forget the time I told you not to roll your eyes at me?”

Seriously? Will thought with a huff. He distantly heard Hannibal nudge his own chair away from the table and the soft clicking of shoes that followed, could feel the man’s body heat from here and the consequent displacement of energy come to a stop at his back. The hand that rested not at his shoulder like he’d been expecting, but at his waist, burned bittersweetly.

“You’re not my keeper,” Will said quietly, anger deflated. “This -whatever we have-, it’s not a business contract.”

“What do we have?” Hannibal asked. “If you had to define it.”

“We’re dating,” the other said almost incredulously. “I lo- sometimes I think I’m in love with you.”

The confession sat between them heavily. Hannibal quickly came to the conclusion that it hadn’t been intentional, that the words had slipped out of Will’s mouth in a moment of unsurety and self-realization. The words resonated with the disquiet in him, pulled it out of Hannibal against his will, and only then, fingers pressing harder against the warmth of his lover, did he remember the night he’d cleaned up after the Stammets disaster.

Blood was tedious but beautiful, the former present as he scrubbed the crimson out of the tiles in the library lobby, and the latter never not a thing of marvel. True, blood was not the reason that he killed, but it was a byproduct that he’d come to accept, the mess a painter cannot avoid as a masterpiece took shape.

As tiresome as this night had become, Hannibal could celebrate inwardly that the body he disposed of was one of Will’s own attempts at a masterpiece -aborted, anger-driven, sloppy beyond belief, but oh so gorgeously feral. A sleek panther sprawled astride its victim and rending flesh with wicked claws, Will had been glorious, and even more so in repose after the kill. Every state of his existence carried enough weight that Hannibal found himself wanting

to help hold it aloft. And it was that thought that had frozen his movements, set his spine into an unnaturally straight angle as his hand stilled against the tile.

Hannibal could be relied upon for assistance, yes, but only when it benefited him. He was unequivocally a selfish individual otherwise, and purposely so, but when it came to Will he had to admit the opposite; he'd do anything to keep the fledgling killer in his orbit.

"Am I not your keeper, then?" Hannibal asked quietly. "Do you not belong to me if we are together?"

"You speak as if I'm an object," Will groused.

"I do not mean it that way, dear Will. In fact by my words I am admitting that you are my keeper as well."

"You belong to me?" Will asked, felt the shape of the words in his mouth and his heart both, and the residual anger left with them.

"Entirely."

It was a tantalizing thought. Will considered Hannibal's response with his breath catching in his throat, cheeks heating as he moved to face the killer at his back. There were still many uncertainties left between them, still words to exchange and secrets to be learned. And yet he reached forward to wrap his arms tightly around his lover's middle, gripped the silken fabric of his suit jacket and buried his face beneath a clean shaven chin. The embrace was returned with power and -yes, love.

"At the risk of sounding incredibly rude," Will whispered against Hannibal's chin. "I'm still mad at you."

Hannibal chuckled good naturedly and tightened his arms, drew his fingers along a taut spine until they came to rest at the belt holding up Will's slightly too-large slacks. He longed to have his lover fit in clothes that accentuated his frame instead of hid it, imagined Will in an ensemble tailored to compliment rather than understate. But he recognized even this part of Will was a deliberate ploy to remain inconsequential.

"Naturally," Hannibal repeated.

Dinner had gone cold. It was a regretful circumstance, but Hannibal cleared their plates and beckoned Will to follow him, and so they entered the den and settled in front of a fireplace that was twice the size of the one in the dining room. The velvet couch there was plush and Will sank into it with a soft sigh, accepted the glass of fine whiskey that was passed to him, and then waited for the other to join him after stoking the fire to life. They tipped their cups together in a silent toast.

"I fear your anger will return quite soon," Hannibal murmured. "Rather, I'm certain it will, with what I am about to tell you."

“Sounds great,” Will said to the fire, unable to catch the other man’s gaze just yet. “Go on. Please.”

Nodding his head once at the polite adverb, Hannibal spoke again: “Shortly after I began to tutor Abigail, she appeared to be distressed.”

“Distressed how?” Will snapped to and looked over at the other with nostrils flaring.

“Emotionally. It was not obvious, I assure you,” the attempt at comfort was rebuked with one of Will’s hands cutting through the air in a gesture of impatience. “Will. I would request patience.”

“Patience? We’re talking about my daughter right now,” *patience can fuck off*, Will thought with a silent snarl of his features, but he inhaled deeply and attempted to calm the rage growing in the pit of his stomach.

“Please,” Hannibal said softly, coaxingly.

“Fine. I’m sorry. Pleas- just tell me why she was distressed. Please, Hannibal, I don’t want any more lies or secrets. Let’s just get this out of the way.”

Hannibal remained silent, unable to resist prolonging the tangible energy that snapped between them. He observed Will’s handsome face as the man attempted to rein in the emotions that flitted over his countenance, but it was impossible for him to hide from Hannibal. Even were his face made of stone the light in those blue eyes told a tale of apprehension, premature regret, and resignation as a body held rigid attempted to prepare itself for the worst. Taking an unhurried sip of his whiskey and savoring the rich taste, Hannibal moved his piece back into a place of advantage -the game resumed.

“Abigail knows that you are a killer, Will.”

“Of course she does, she saw me kill Stammets,” Will shook his head in confusion.

“No, Will,” Hannibal set one hand on the other’s thigh gently. “She knew before that night. Long before it.”

Blue eyes widened in further confusion. Hannibal devoured the moment and held it close to his heart as he watched Will’s defenses begin to crumble brick by brick.

“When- what did she- how? What did she say? Tell me exactly what she said.”

“Will, take a moment to breathe, p-”

“*Tell me what she said, Hannibal*!”

The glass of unfinished whiskey nearly soared into the nearest hard surface as Will jumped to his feet, but Hannibal charged into action to catch it without spilling a drop. He set it aside on a table with his own and then enfolded the shaking man against his chest, tucked him back under his chin and breathed him in deeply. When Will broke it would be beautiful, and Hannibal would be there to pick up the fragments and mold them into his own masterpiece.

“She saw you one night from her bedroom,” Hannibal said quietly. “You returned home with blood soaking your clothes and glasses.”

“Oh god,” Will’s heart skipped a beat -he’d returned home bloodied various times, he’d just always assumed his daughter was fast asleep, protected by and from the monster that slinked back into their home after a hunt.

“You mustn't blame yourself, my love,” but the words might have been spoken into the abyss for all the effect they had on Will; and perhaps it was that reason that Hannibal closed his eyes and let his arms loosen infinitesimally.

Either way, there was nothing quite like shock to wake a man out of victory.

Will’s fist certainly did.

Chapter End Notes

Will is a sassy muffin ♥

Also I couldn't help but slip a lyric from one of my favorite songs into this chapter. Cookies to anyone that finds it/recognizes it xD

Worth of a Lesson Learned

Chapter Summary

Hannibal learns his lesson and Will continues to be a sassy boy.

Chapter Notes

A little shorter than other chapters, but I LOVED writing this!

All mistakes are mine~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will Graham was not a slight man by any means.

Where Hannibal possessed bulk and density tightly bound into six feet of astounding power, Will retained a leanness that belied his own strength. True the older man had a few inches of height on him, but ever the diligent one at carrying himself just so, it became easy for anyone to forget that Will was not weak nor incapable of holding his own when it came down to it.

Even someone as astute as Hannibal, who prided himself on his ability to know a person intrinsically (especially this one in particular), could be made a fool of.

Will taught him quite the thorough lesson in the form of his fist meeting Hannibal's jaw. And it wasn't any subtle clip of warning, either. Hannibal Lecter felt his head snap back with the force of the unexpected strike, and a huff of breath gusted out of him as he sprawled back onto the plush couch behind him. In any other circumstance the hit would not have landed or perhaps even initiated, but he surmised rather quickly that where one lesson could be taught, so too could another. He nudged his fingers against the bruise he could already feel forming, pressed down to elicit more of the stinging pain that blossomed to the surface of his skin, and then glanced up at the seething man responsible for it.

In addition to having been successfully surprised, Hannibal acknowledged that he had erred drastically.

Will did not in fact break prettily -he did not break at all, actually. A more apt description of the blazing fury present above him probably danced along the lines of the blunt force of a nuclear detonation, one that shook the foundations of the smaller, no less strong frame of Will Graham. The fallout included a growl of frustration and a heaving breath before the other turned tail and strode out of the den as if nothing had happened. Hannibal remained in silence

as he calmly compartmentalized the various reactions that wanted to manifest themselves, choosing instead to stand proudly and adjust his gently rumpled suit.

He toed out of his shoes to quietly pursue his attacker on socked feet.

Will was ready for him, however. He stood waiting in the kitchen, leaning against the far side of the island counter they had sat at the night of Miss Sterling's death, and Hannibal sensed that words wouldn't be of use here, not yet. The rage that he could feel emanating from Will, back turned to him deliberately, could be felt in the very air, a bitter scent that pervaded his house with proof of an evening gone awry. One step onto the tile announced his arrival as surely as if he had banged a gong, but this action was also deliberate. They were both actively playing the game again, and Hannibal was determined to regain his advantage.

"For someone who walks as if the world is beneath him," Will said, voice deceptively calm. "You sure as fuck make some awful decisions, Mister Lecter."

"I am only human," Hannibal responded as he came to a standstill on the other side of the counter. "What decision do you speak of, Will?"

"You lied to me," Will said. "You kept this from me when you could have told me so long ago."

"You are correct. But there is more to it than that," the kitchen was gravely silent, no ticking of a cheap, plastic clock here. "In fact, I'm quite certain the brunt of the anger you feel currently is towards yourself."

"And why do you think that?" Will turned around slowly, faced Hannibal with an expression of calm; the one before a storm, it was obvious.

"Abigail came to me," Hannibal whispered. "Not you."

As if a switch had been flipped, the storm broke out, blue eyes gone black with emotion that far exceeded anger, at him or Hannibal or anyone otherwise, and Will launched himself onto and over the counter with a swiftness to match the serial killer's. He took Hannibal down in a tackle to the ground, but the older man was ready this time, jabbed his fingers into the fledgling's side with enough force to make Will gasp audibly, and yet -*I am rather fortunate, to experience the angle Eldon Stammets must have before the light left his eyes*, Hannibal thought as slender hands wrapped around his throat in a clamping grip.

"The second I met you I should have done this," Will growled into Hannibal's ear, leaning close to his head as he lay astride the other's body. "What do I do instead? Endanger my daughter and myself like a fucking idiot. And for what? *Murder dates and murder love*? It was all a joke after all, wasn't it?"

Hannibal felt the strength reverberating through Will's body from every point that touched his own, and he reflected absently that their position mirrored one of sexual intimacy. He could already imagine the blush staining Will's cheeks a hot red were the situation not a dangerous one instead, but Hannibal allowed the thought to dance at the forefront of his mind just as he allowed Will to strangle him. Maroon eyes narrowed, hair mussed from its careful

styling and body held down upon his own kitchen floor, Hannibal Lecter snapped his gaze into Will Graham's and *smiled* as his lover choked him. Then it was only fair that he reverse their positions, when it became obvious that yes, this was a joke; at least presently. No one would die tonight, not here and certainly not now.

Will's head smacked into hard tile with a grunt of pain, and the hands that wrapped around his throat were comically large in comparison to the delicate column of flesh. Indeed, Hannibal likely only needed one hand to successfully wring his neck, and wasn't that the icing on the cake. But the grip didn't squeeze, the snake didn't constrict despite immobilizing its prey, and Will looked up into Hannibal's smiling face, at sharp teeth exposed in near-glee, and felt the emotion drain out of him as surely as it did fill him. Rage became anger became frustration, until even that became nothing but a muted feeling of resignation, and he deflated beneath Hannibal with a loud sigh.

"My dear Will," Hannibal whispered as he brought his mouth close to Will's ear. "You are so beautiful when you want to kill me."

"Is that supposed to be a compliment?" Will asked.

"Most definitely," they were both breathing heavily, not quite panting, the exertion having left them both winded to an extent.

"Are you going to kill me now? Cut me up and store me in one of your creepy freezers?" Will's tone aimed for curiosity, but the undercurrent of fear hitched his breath once, and Hannibal's smile softened as he grazed his lips along the smooth skin beneath him.

"Never," Hannibal professed as he bestowed a kiss on Will's temple. "Just as you would never kill me."

"You say that as if I didn't just have my hands around *your* throat," Will laughed haltingly and closed his eyes while Hannibal's mouth trailed along his jawline.

"You would have stopped."

Hannibal was correct, but that didn't make Will feel any better. As the adrenaline faded and his mind cleared, he could pinpoint the exact moment he had lost control, not to mention when he had fallen into Hannibal's trap. This man knew his weaknesses, knew how to weave words and situations in a way that Will couldn't, his fuse too short and his patience shorter. The other's words from earlier settled deep in his heart, the proclamation that Will was mad at himself not at all far from the truth, and he thought about his dear Abi, who had *known* all this time.

"I would have," Will whispered into Hannibal's mouth as warm lips hovered over his own.

"Who will catch us as we're falling, then, if either of us died tonight?" Hannibal asked, and Will opened his mouth to accept the hungry kiss that descended upon him.

Will tangled his hands in the fabric of Hannibal's suit and held him tightly, crushing their mouths together wetly, teeth clacking with the force of it and noses bumping together none

too gently. He felt the large hands leave his throat to settle on either side of his head to brace the other's considerable weight, and they adjusted their positions in time with the other until Hannibal straddled Will's waist comfortably. They breathed through their noses heavily as the night caught up to them both, any residual energy transferring into passion, and while Hannibal devoured every sound he could manage and stuck his tongue lewdly down Will's throat in an entirely different manner of choking, he was inwardly victorious. He felt Will's grasping hands press hard along his spine and tangle into the back of his suit, and he mimicked the near-desperate action as he fisted one of his own into messy curls.

"I'm sorry," Will murmured as they drew away.

"You are forgiven, dear Will," Hannibal spoke the words and only then did he realize that he meant them, too, just as he meant the next word: "Always."

Will looked up at the creature above him with no small amount of awe. Hannibal was the opposite of his usual self, hair falling across his eyes and into his face in unruly clumps, and a face chiseled from stone was malleable with emotion -affection and pride and something else that Will couldn't name as dark eyes looked down at him. He let one of his hands fall away from the other's suit to smack uncaringly onto the tile beneath him as exhaustion began to flood his body, but still he met the embrace that followed, wrapped his other arm tight across broad shoulders as Hannibal's mouth found his pulse point. It was almost worshipful, they way those lips decorated his throat with fleeting butterfly-gentle kisses.

"Come, dear Will," the man whispered into his neck. "Let us get off this floor, I expect it isn't good for either of us."

"Are you calling me old?" Will laughed as Hannibal got to his feet and helped him up.

"Nonsense. Were I to do that I would be implying that I am ancient," Hannibal smoothed Will's clothes into place and then took a moment to put order to his hair, before leaning against the island behind them and drawing the other close once more.

"God forbid," the words were muffled as Will was enfolded into powerful arms once again, an echo of earlier before Will had punched Hannibal in the face.

"Indeed."

❀

Dessert: chocolate souffle housed in an ornate ramekin, garnished with grated orange zest and drizzled with a light syrup.

Will waited politely for Hannibal to take the first bite this time, an action that had maroon eyes lighting up with appreciation. Bowed lips closed around a mouthful of the treat, and Hannibal didn't break their eye contact once as he consumed his own creation with pride. His tongue traced his lips afterwards to chase any chocolatey remains away and his expression became one of bemusement as Will raised a single eyebrow.

"It is impolite to stare," Hannibal said lightly.

“And here I thought you’d realized by now that I’m not exactly a polite guy,” Will joked easily.

“I beg to differ. You are above most others in that regard-”

“When I want to be, right?” Will tucked into his own dessert, finally looking away from Hannibal’s frustratingly handsome face.

“Are you trying to make a point by interrupting me, dear Will?”

Will sucked his bottom lip into his mouth and closed his eyes as he savored the bittersweet taste of chocolate and tangy liqueur, and when he looked at Hannibal this time he did so coyly, saying, “Most definitely.”

Afterwards they returned to the den to share a toast that was not silent. They stood in front of the fireplace and faced each other pleasantly, Will’s eyes bright and Hannibal’s own narrowed in consideration. Once again they faced truths and secrets and the revealing of which that could and would splinter their tentative moment of peace; and this time Hannibal was prepared, lesson learned and new knowledge suffusing every corner of his brain.

“To honesty,” Will announced dryly.

“To honesty,” Hannibal agreed.

And then he began to tell Will everything.

Chapter End Notes

DUN DUN DUNNNNNN. Next chapter is gonna be the big reveal. And the end of the angst. Because I need me Murder Family fluff goddammit.

Worth of a Victory

Chapter Summary

> Will finally learns the truth. Hannibal finds himself at an impasse. Abigail just wants a family.

Chapter Notes

> This was a little hard to write, and I probably should have gave it a day before I continued, but....I confess I was far too excited xD So this might read a little choppily, but I'm happy with it ♥

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will sat ramrod straight on one of the comfortable green chairs off to the side of the couch, opting to tread away from the intimacy of the firelight as he learned the truth from the mouth of a snake. Hannibal's voice was gentled with a soothing tone, the handler of a beast wary of being bitten once again, and as he spoke he kept his body angled towards his guest politely. Will tried not to feel pride at the bruise darkening the elegant jaw, but despite having been mollified for now, he was pleased to see his mark upon a face that generally looked untouchable, a glaring purple splotch marring the perfectly proper countenance. And honestly, Hannibal looked kind of hot while roughed up, and the younger man smiled privately into his glass of whiskey.

He pushed the thought aside in favor of continuing the conversation that would hopefully set this conflict of theirs straight once and for all -well, until the next one, at least. Will was beginning to come to terms with the fact that Hannibal Lecter was incapable of keeping life simple.

"Without prior knowledge on the night in particular," Hannibal said. "I cannot adequately say when Abigail witnessed you return home. While she told me about it several weeks into her lessons with me, I believe that she had never intended to, if it is any consolation at all. It is an unfortunate fact that each person has the potential to become a victim to their emotions."

"Meaning?" Will asked the question uncertainly, not enjoying the image of his daughter existing alongside him with the knowledge of his unsightly activities an invisible wall erected between them. "I just don't understand why she would go to you, a stranger, and not me. I'm her father."

“When you look at Abigail, do you see a person or a child?” Hannibal answered with his own question.

“I see my daughter,” Will answered succinctly.

“Yes, there is no doubt there, dear Will. What I am asking you is this: do you merely see Abigail as the child you raised from infancy, or do you see the person she is becoming?”

“I don’t understand what you are asking me,” Will sighed with frustration. “Abigail is my daughter. She’s my world. Are you trying to imply that I don’t know her?”

“Never,” Hannibal crossed one knee over the other and nursed his own glass of whiskey. “I am implying that you are unwilling to know who she is becoming.”

“That’s ridiculous,” the ghost of anger could be heard in his tone now.

“If it is ridiculous, why couldn’t you talk to her after she witnessed you kill Stammets? Why do you still pretend she isn’t intelligent enough to know exactly what happened that night?”

“I know my daughter is smart, Hannibal. Stop insulting me.”

Hannibal glanced at his guest, poised to make his move in the event that it were required of him. Will had made it very obvious that he was a force to be reckoned with, and he found himself touching the bruise on his jaw absently throughout the night. He reflected with amusement that his pride had taken the figurative and literal hit in stride, unable to feel honestly angered by the slight against his person, at least where Will was concerned. It was refreshing to be taught when you fully expected to be the only one doing the teaching; the fledgling killer might be just that, but his potential was astoundingly immense. Hannibal had just made the mistake of assuming he knew Will Graham more than he actually did. That could easily be remedied.

“I’m unsure if you’re being deliberately obstinate or if you are honestly unable to see the truth,” Hannibal said.

“And you’re speaking in riddles. Isn’t this conversation supposed to answer my questions? You’re the one being obstinate, Hannibal. Get to the point.”

“My point, Will, is that you are unable to accept that Abigail is capable of understanding why you kill,” Hannibal paused to take another sip from his glass. “And that *that* is why she came to me and not you.”

Will huffed out a breath and gulped the rest of his whiskey down, saying, “Okay. Say I agree with that. At what point did teaching my daughter how to play the piano turn into confession time with Mister Lecter? And why didn’t you come to me immediately?”

“If I had come to you as a stranger about this, would you have believed me or simply killed me?” another question-answer, and Will’s nostrils flared as he took the words in and considered them. “As to your first question, I fall back on the opinion that Abigail did not

mean to confess. Additionally, I believe that she neglected to tell you because she is victim to the same thing that prevents you from truly knowing her."

"And what's that?" Will had a feeling that he would regret asking.

"You simply love each other so much that you would do anything to keep the other happy," Hannibal replied. "*Anything*."

A piece of the puzzle fell into place just then, fitting in with the rest of the picture Will was trying to make sense of with a resolute click. He set his empty glass aside and narrowed his eyes at Hannibal, noticing the second the other became aware of a change in the atmosphere. Instead of resorting to violence, however, Will only sat forward and stared at the ground between his feet.

"Abi knew I was going to kill Jorge Corwell," Will said to the floor. "She- she knew I was going to kill him the second I found out that he'd attacked her."

"Yes," Hannibal confirmed. "I'm afraid I must admit you do not give your daughter much credit, Will. She is exceedingly intelligent."

"You tell me that like I don't *know*," Will felt real anger thrum into his chest as he snapped his gaze back onto Hannibal, but it wasn't directed at the man seated next to him.

"I am merely making an observation."

Will scrubbed his hands tiredly over his face and into his hair. He was angry at himself, yes. More than that he was trying to come to terms with a truth that implied he'd been willfully blind in regards to his own daughter. When he thought about her, he realized, he did so with the warmth that belied each moment he could remember her wide blue eyes looking up at him with happiness. He saw his daughter as the infant he'd adopted and raised through each first step and word and scribbled drawing pinned to a too-empty fridge. He'd struggled to make ends meet and succeeded despite the odds against them both, and there existed no part in him that would take any of it back were he given the chance.

Hannibal was correct. He didn't know his daughter. Not really.

"Will?" Hannibal's voice interrupted his self-flagellating thoughts. "Are you quite alright?"

"I'm just, I don't know. You're right -you're always right. It's just hard to accept is all," Will leaned back into the chair and rested his elbow along the arm of it, laid his chin into the palm of his hand, and looked over at the dying fire with a feeling of emptiness beginning to develop in his heart.

"I understand," Hannibal soothed.

"Do you really?" Will wondered aloud, and he frowned as he remembered something. "Where does Elise Nichols fall into place?"

Hannibal felt his guts tangle as they wound tight with tension, the question he had been anticipating the most finally being voiced, at least with seriousness. This entire topic was

honestly old as far as he was concerned, and he felt mildly annoyed by Will's obstinance, which likened conversing about his daughter to yanking out teeth with a pair of rusty pliers. As it were, Hannibal wanted to put this conflict behind and focus on learning Will at his own leisure, and so he buried the impatience and focused his gaze gravely on the man in question. He wondered if the beast would break this time.

"As we've discussed, Elise was a student of mine," Hannibal began carefully, and he held his hand up to silence Will before he could comment. "She is no longer my student. And here I will pause to ask you -are you prepared to take my answer to heart, Will?"

"What does that-"

"I expect a yes or a no, if you would be so kind," Hannibal interrupted primly.

"Yes," Will eventually said, foreboding dancing along every vein in his body.

No, Will echoed inwardly. His gaze bore into Hannibal's gleaming eyes as he waited for the other man to speak, and his ears began to ring as his heart quickened. Nothing could prepare Will Graham for what he learned next, however.

"You and I are not the only ones capable of murder, Will."

Will wanted to ask what that meant. He wanted to scream and rip his hair from his scalp, but mostly he wanted to dash Hannibal's glass across the floor when it came to rest against thinly bowed lips after the man had spoken such damning words. Instead he sat in the impossibly comfy chair in Hannibal's house, the lair of a monster not so different from himself. Blood rushed through his veins thick and sluggish and his limbs grew heavy, his heart climbed into his throat and pounded a drumbeat into his head, and still he remained silent and unmoving. Finally Will got to his feet and walked out of the room; he walked and he didn't stop. Even as Hannibal's voice called his name and footsteps followed behind him, he strode out of the inordinately luxurious home without a word or a glance over tense shoulders.

It wasn't until he stood in front of his tiny apartment that Will stopped, and it was there, curled up in bed after Lydia had gone, that he broke.

❀

Hannibal closed his front door after Will's retreating form had disappeared from sight. He returned to the den to retrieve their glasses and then made his way into the kitchen to wash them, and as he set them aside he acknowledged his victory.

It tasted of ash and felt like claws sinking into his heart.

Afterwards, showered and and comfortable in bed, Hannibal Lecter discerned that the game had come to an end. And it did so for the simple reason that he no longer wished to play it, perceived victory or not. The consequences proved to be far less pleasing than he had predicted -then again, he hadn't expected that he would fall in love with Will when he instigated it in the first place. Hannibal found the thought of his beast breaking distasteful from this new vantage, and he knew he wouldn't get any sleep as a result. He threw back the

covers and stripped out of his sleepwear, folded it neatly and set it on the foot of the bed, and then strode into his closet to dress for an outing.

Moments later he padded into his kitchen and then into the pantry, casting a cursory glance around his ordered surroundings. With a quiet click, he opened the trapdoor that hid there and then descended into the darkness awaiting him. Forty minutes later he left his property in the unmarked black car, clad in plastic and ill intentions.

Someone would die tonight, after all.

❀

Abigail lay in bed that night unable to sleep. Her father had return home not ten minutes ago, and she listened quietly as he readied himself for bed. When she heard him begin to cry, wracking sobs muffled into his pillow, she knew that Mister Lecter had finally told him everything. And so she untangled herself from her blankets and tiptoed out of her room into the dimly lit hallway.

“Dad?” she whispered, opening his door as quietly as she could.

“Abi?” Will sat up in bed with a gasp as he caught sight of his little girl.

“Are you okay, dad?” Abigail asked softly.

“Yeah,” he sniffled and caught his breath, and he nearly recycled an old lie, almost went with *just a bad night, sweetie, go back to bed*, and instead he swallowed around the lump in his throat and went for honesty. “Me and Mister Lecter had a pretty long talk.”

“I knew it,” she said. “Now we can be happy, right? Me, you, and Mister Lecter?”

Will felt his heart skip a beat at her childish features as she stood at the foot of his bed. There was an uncertain quality to her stance, a doe about flee at the slightest wrong movement. He wiped at the tears staining his cheeks and forced a smile onto his face.

“Come here,” Will lifted the edge of his blanket and his smile widened as she launched herself over the bed, and they settled together just as they had when she was younger and was too frightened to sleep alone.

“Do you still love me?” Abigail asked seriously.

“I will always love you, Abigail,” Will said -his heart had run cold at those words coming from his daughter’s mouth, at a question being asked that he couldn’t conceive of ever having to answer.

“No matter what?” earnest blue eyes looked into his own with a tentative smile on small lips.

“No matter what.”

Abigail watched her father fall asleep, and she burrowed under the blankets comfortably while she closed her eyes and attempted to do the same, a happiness in her chest threatening

to burst as she contemplated the future. They could finally be a family now.

Abigail's words broke off as they both heard a creaking noise. She looked over her shoulder and found Elise's brown eyes staring at them, widened with fear after hearing their discussion. Unperturbed, Hannibal turned on the bench and got to his feet.

"Elise," he greeted pleasantly. "Is there something you've forgotten?"

"No," the older girl swallowed audibly as she stepped further into the room. "I'm sorry for eavesdropping, Mister Lecter."

"I should hope so," he said sternly. "That was rather rude."

"Very rude," Abigail agreed from her place at the piano.

"I'm sorry," Elise repeated uncertainly.

Hannibal didn't bother hiding the smile that crawled ominously over his features. Elise blinked as she looked at her younger peer and then back at her instructor, expression unsure and frightened as she recalled what had caught her attention earlier.

She took a single step back.

Chapter End Notes

OKAY SO there's probably only gonna be one more part to this series, but IT WILL BE HAPPY AND FULL OF FLUFF. And lots of comforting and explanations on Hannibal's part!

I love you all so very much, and thank you for continuing to join me on this journey ♥

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!